

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for efficiently categorizing images on a computer system, comprising the steps of:
 - (a) ordering a series of related images that are to be categorized by time of capture;
 - (b) displaying category levels for input of category information by a user, wherein the category levels include a highest-category level and a lowest-category level, the highest-category level having a low frequency of data change between the series of related images, and the lowest-category level having a high frequency of data change between the series of related images;
 - (c) categorizing a first image by allowing the user to enter highest-category level data and lowest-category level data;
 - (d) categorizing a next image in the series by leaving the highest-category level data unchanged, and automatically selecting the lowest-category level data for reentry by the user, thereby eliminating the need for the user to reenter the highest-category level data.
 2. The method of claim 1 wherein step (d) further includes the step of:

- (i) comparing date and time differences between the first image and the next image to automatically detect a category change from the first image to the next image; and
 - (ii) if a category change is detected, automatically selecting an appropriate category level for reentry by the user.

3. The method of claim 1 further including the step of:

- (e) in response to a user pressing a key, moving a cursor from the lowest-category level to a higher-category level for data entry.

4. The method of claim 3 further including the step of:

- (d) categorizing another image in the series by leaving the cursor at the higher-category level for data entry.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein step (b) further includes the step of:

- (i) displaying an intermediate category level having medium frequency of data change between the series of related images.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the (c) further includes the step of:

- (ii) as the user enters data, comparing the data with previous entries, and when a match is found, automatically entering the previous entry to thereby reduce inconsistent terminology.

- 1 7. The method of claim 6 wherein step (b) further includes the step of:
2 (ii) displaying a thumbnail of the current image being categorized.

1 8. A system for efficiently categorization digital images, comprising:
2 input means for receiving a series of digital images;
3 a display;
4 a computer;
5 interface means for a user to operate the computer;
6 storage means for storing the digital images; and
7 an image management application executed by the computer, wherein the image
8 management application includes means for;
9 ordering the series of digital images by time of capture;
10 displaying category levels on the display for input of category information by
11 a user using the interface means, wherein the category levels include a highest-
12 category level and a lowest-category level, the highest-category level having a low
13 frequency of data change between the series of related images, and the lowest-
14 category level having a high frequency of data change between the series of digital
15 images,
16 categorizing a first image by allowing the user to enter highest-category level
17 data and lowest-category level data,
18 categorizing a next image in the series by leaving the highest-category level
19 data unchanged, and

20 automatically selecting the lowest-category level data for reentry by the user,
21 thereby eliminating the need for the user to reenter the highest-category level data.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the image management application further
2 includes means for comparing date and time differences between the first image and the next
3 image to automatically detect a category change from the first image to the next image, and
4 if a category change is detected, automatically selecting an appropriate category level for
5 reentry by the user.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein the computer comprises a web server that is
remote from the display and interface means.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the display is a television.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein the interface means comprises a keyboard
2 and a mouse.

1 13. The system of claim 12 wherein the interface means comprises voice
2 recognition.

1 14. A computer readable medium containing program instructions for efficiently
2 categorizing images on a computer system, the instructions for:

- (a) ordering a series of related images that are to be categorized by time of capture;
 - (b) displaying category levels for input of category information by a user, wherein the category levels include a highest-category level and a lowest-category level, the highest-category level having a low frequency of data change between the series of related images, and the lowest-category level having a high frequency of data change between the series of related images;
 - (c) categorizing a first image by allowing the user to enter highest-category level data and lowest-category level data;
 - (d) categorizing a next image in the series by leaving the highest-category level data unchanged, and automatically selecting the lowest-category level data for reentry by the user, thereby eliminating the need for the user to reenter the highest-category level data.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein step (d) further includes the step of:

- (i) comparing date and time differences between the first image and the next image to automatically detect a category change from the first image to the next image; and
- (ii) if a category change is detected, automatically selecting an appropriate category level for reentry by the user.

16. The computer readable medium of claim 14 further including the instruction

- (e) in response to a user pressing a key, moving a cursor from the lowest-category level to a higher-category level for data entry.

17. The computer readable medium of claim 16 further including the instruction

of:

- (d) categorizing another image in the series by leaving the cursor at the higher-category level for data entry.

18. The computer readable medium of claim 17 wherein instruction (b) further

includes the instruction of:

- (i) displaying an intermediate category level having medium frequency of data change between the series of related images.

19. The computer readable medium of claim 18 wherein the (c) further includes

the instruction of:

- (ii) as the user enters data, comparing the data with previous entries, and when a match is found, automatically entering the previous entry to thereby reduce inconsistent terminology.

20. The computer readable medium of claim 19 wherein instruction (b) further

includes the instruction of:

- (ii) displaying a thumbnail of the current image being categorized.

- 1 21. A method for minimizing inconsistent terminology when categorizing a
2 sequence of images in an image management system, comprising the steps of:
3 (a) providing an available categories list containing predefined key category
4 terms;
5 (b) categorizing a current image by allowing the user to copy key category terms
6 from the available categories list to a current category list;
7 (c) applying the key category terms in the current categories list to the current
8 image;
9 (d) categorizing a next image by applying the key category terms in the current
10 categories list to the next image; and
11 (e) allowing the user to temporarily deselect a key category term in the current
12 categories list, such that the deselected key category term is not applied to the
13 next image, but is available to the sequence of images.
- 1 22. The method claim 17 wherein step (e) further includes the step of:
2 (i) displaying the key category terms in the current categories list in a
3 different format from the deselected key category term.
- 1 23. The method claim 17 wherein step (e) further includes the step of:
2 (i) displaying the deselected key category term in a separate list.

1 24. A computer readable medium containing program instructions for
2 minimizing inconsistent terminology when categorizing a sequence of images in an image
3 management system, the instructions for:

- 4 (f) providing an available categories list containing predefined key category
5 terms;
6 (g) categorizing a current image by allowing the user to copy key category terms
7 from the available categories list to a current category list;
8 (h) applying the key category terms in the current categories list to the current
9 image;
10 (i) categorizing a next image by applying the key category terms in the current
11 categories list to the next image; and
12 (j) allowing the user to temporarily deselect a key category term in the current
13 categories list, such that the deselected key category term is not applied to the
14 next image, but is available to the sequence of images.

1 25. The computer readable medium claim 24 wherein instruction (e) further
2 includes the instruction of:

- 3 (i) displaying the key category terms in the current categories list in a
4 different format from the deselected key category term.

1 26. The computer readable medium claim 25 wherein instruction (e) further
2 includes the instruction of:

- 3 (i) displaying the deselected key category term in a separate list.